

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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1. A hotel reservation system, comprising:
a hotel master database operable to store generic information and specific information associated with one or more hotels;
an inventory database operable to store a number of rooms available at the hotels on one or more dates and a price of each room; and
a reservation engine operable to:
receive a hotel availability request, the request including one or more parameters;
access the hotel master database and the inventory database to obtain information associated with the request;
determine one or more hotels that meet the parameters of the request in response to obtaining the information from the hotel master database and the inventory database;
communicate a list of the hotels meeting the parameters, the list including at least one generic hotel listing;
receive a reservation request for a hotel associated with a generic hotel listing; and
create a reservation according to the reservation request.
2. The hotel reservation system of Claim 1, wherein the reservation engine is further operable to:
receive a request for a description of a hotel associated with a generic hotel listing; and
communicate a generic description of the hotel, wherein the generic description does not directly identify the hotel.
3. The hotel reservation system of Claim 1, wherein the reservation engine is further operable to communicate a specific description of the hotel at which a reservation has been created, the specific description identifying the hotel.

4. The hotel reservation system of Claim 1, wherein the generic information stored in the hotel master database comprises a generic name of a hotel and a generic description of a hotel.

5. The hotel reservation system of Claim 1, wherein the specific information stored in the hotel master database comprises a specific name of a hotel and a specific description of a hotel.

6. The hotel reservation system of Claim 1, wherein the price of one or more rooms stored in the inventory database comprises a discounted price associated with a generic hotel listing.

7. The hotel reservation system of Claim 1, wherein the parameters included in the hotel availability request comprise a date or dates for which a room is requested.

8. The hotel reservation system of Claim 1, wherein the generic hotel listing comprises a generic hotel name and a price of a hotel room at a hotel associated with the generic hotel listing.

9. The hotel reservation system of Claim 8, wherein the generic hotel listing further comprises an approximate location of the hotel associated with the generic hotel listing.

10. The hotel reservation system of Claim 1, wherein:
the reservation engine is coupled to the Internet; and
the reservation engine is further operable to:
receive the hotel availability request from a computer coupled to the
Internet; and
communicate the list of hotels to the computer in the form of one or
more Web pages.

11. The hotel reservation system of Claim 1, wherein:
the reservation engine is coupled to a call center, the call center coupled to a
telephone network and operable to receive calls from telephone users; and
the reservation engine is further operable to:
receive the hotel availability request from an operator at the call center,
the operator receiving the hotel availability request from the telephone user over the
telephone network; and
communicate the list of hotels to the operator for communication to the
telephone user.

12. A method for making hotel reservations, comprising:
receiving a hotel availability request, the request including one or more parameters;

obtaining information associated with the request from one or more databases,
the databases including generic information and specific information associated with
one or more hotels, a number of rooms available at the hotels on one or more dates,
and a price of each room;

determining one or more hotels that meet the parameters of the request in
response to obtaining the information from the databases;

communicating a list of the hotels meeting the parameters, the list including at
least one generic hotel listing;

receiving a reservation request for a hotel associated with a generic hotel
listing; and

creating a reservation according to the reservation request.

13. The method of Claim 12, further comprising:

receiving a request for a description of a hotel associated with a generic hotel
listing; and

communicating a generic description of the hotel, wherein the generic
description does not directly identify the hotel.

14. The method of Claim 12, further comprising communicating a specific
description of the hotel at which a reservation has been created, the specific
description identifying the hotel.

15. The method of Claim 12, wherein the generic information included in
the one or more databases comprises a generic name of a hotel and a generic
description of a hotel.

16. The method of Claim 12, wherein the specific information included in the one or more databases comprises a specific name of a hotel and a specific description of a hotel.

5 17. The method of Claim 12, wherein the price of one or more rooms included in the one or more databases comprises a discounted price associated with a generic hotel listing.

10 18. The method of Claim 12, wherein the parameters included in the hotel availability request comprise a date or dates for which a room is requested.

15 19. The method of Claim 12, wherein the generic hotel listing comprises a generic hotel name and a price of a hotel room at a hotel associated with the generic hotel listing.

20 20. The method of Claim 19, wherein the generic hotel listing further comprises an approximate location of the hotel associated with the generic hotel listing.

21. The method of Claim 12, wherein:
receiving the hotel availability request comprises receiving the request from a computer coupled to the Internet; and
communicating the list of hotels comprises communicating the list to the computer in the form of one or more Web pages.

22. The method of Claim 12, wherein:

receiving the hotel availability request comprises receiving the request from an operator at a call center, the call center coupled to a telephone network and the operator operable to receive the hotel availability request from a telephone user over the telephone network; and

~~communicating the list of hotels comprises communicating the list to the operator for communication to the telephone user.~~

23. A transaction system, comprising:

an item master database operable to store generic information and specific information associated with one or more items;

an inventory database operable to store availability and price data associated with the items; and

a transaction engine operable to:

receive an item availability request, the request including one or more parameters;

access the item master database and the inventory database to obtain information associated with the request;

determine one or more items that meet the parameters of the request in response to obtaining the information from the item master database and the inventory database;

communicate a list of the items meeting the parameters, the list including at least one generic item listing;

receive a request for an item associated with a generic item listing; and
complete a transaction associated with the item.

24. The transaction system of Claim 23, wherein the transaction engine is further operable to:

receive a request for a description of an item associated with a generic item listing; and

communicate a generic description of the item, wherein the generic description does not directly identify the item.

25. The transaction system of Claim 23, wherein the transaction engine is further operable to communicate a specific description of the item for which a transaction has been completed, the specific description identifying the item.

26. The transaction system of Claim 23, wherein the generic information stored in the item master database comprises a generic name of an item and a generic description of an item.

5 27. The transaction system of Claim 23, wherein the specific information stored in the item master database comprises a specific name of an item and a specific description of an item.

10 28. The transaction system of Claim 23, wherein the price data stored in the inventory database comprises a discounted price associated with a generic item listing.

15 29. The transaction system of Claim 23, wherein the generic item listing comprises a generic item name and a price of an item associated with the generic item listing.

20 30. The transaction system of Claim 23, wherein:
the transaction engine is coupled to the Internet; and
the transaction engine is further operable to:
receive the item availability request from a computer coupled to the
Internet; and
communicate the list of items to the computer in the form of one or
more Web pages.

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31. The transaction system of Claim 23, wherein:

the transaction engine is coupled to a call center, the call center coupled to a telephone network and operable to receive calls from telephone users; and

the transaction engine is further operable to:

5 receive the item availability request from an operator at the call center, the operator receiving the item availability request from the telephone user over the telephone network; and

communicate the list of items to the operator for communication to the telephone user.

32. A method for conducting transactions involving generically identified items, comprising:

receiving an item availability request, the request including one or more parameters;

5 obtaining information associated with the request from one or more databases, the databases including generic information and specific information associated with one or more items, availability data associated with the items, and a price of each item;

10 determining one or more items that meet the parameters of the request in response to obtaining the information from the databases;

communicating a list of the items meeting the parameters, the list including at least one generic item listing;

15 receiving a request for an item associated with a generic item listing; and completing a transaction according to the request.

33. The method of Claim 32, further comprising:

receiving a request for a description of an item associated with a generic item listing; and

20 communicating a generic description of the item, wherein the generic description does not directly identify the item.

25 34. The method of Claim 32, further comprising communicating a specific description of the item after a transaction for the item has been completed, the specific description identifying the item.

35. The method of Claim 32, wherein the generic information included in the one or more databases comprises a generic name of an item and a generic description of an item.

36. The method of Claim 32, wherein the specific information included in the one or more databases comprises a specific name of an item and a specific description of an item.

5 37. The method of Claim 32, wherein the price of one or more items included in the one or more databases comprises a discounted price associated with a generic item listing.

10 38. The method of Claim 32, wherein the generic item listing comprises a generic item name and a price of an item associated with the generic item listing.

15 39. The method of Claim 32, wherein:
receiving the item availability request comprises receiving the request from a computer coupled to the Internet; and
communicating the list of items comprises communicating the list to the computer in the form of one or more Web pages.

20 40. The method of Claim 32, wherein:
receiving the item availability request comprises receiving the request from an operator at a call center, the call center coupled to a telephone network and the operator operable to receive the item availability request from a telephone user over the telephone network; and
communicating the list of items comprises communicating the list to the operator for communication to the telephone user.